

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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FCC Mail Room

April 12, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We applaud the creation of the Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force. If implemented correctly, the Mobility Fund II (MF-II) and Connect America Fund Phase II (CAF-II) auctions are an opportunity for real progress in the Commission's efforts to close the digital divide. We write to urge that an accurate understanding of mobile broadband coverage for consumers in rural America guide the Task Force's efforts to implement these upcoming auctions.

The MF-II and CAF-II auctions should promote new broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas in a manner that accounts for the real-world experiences of those living in the most remote parts of the country. To ensure the limited funding available for these auctions is allocated efficiently and responsibly, the Task Force should work to ensure that coverage data is collected in a consistent and robust way.

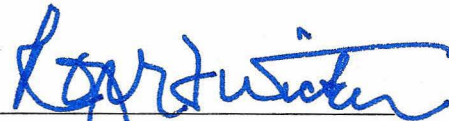
More importantly, the Commission's efforts must accurately target every area that is in need of support so that no one is left behind. Residents, first responders, businesses, public institutions, and travelers in rural areas need reliable mobile broadband access. To that end, collecting and using reliable, standardized coverage data are critical steps toward ensuring consumers in the most rural and remote communities have access to the comparable services that Congress mandated for Universal Service.

We fully support the Commission's objective to promote broadband deployment throughout rural America and look forward to continuing to work with you to close the digital divide.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

June 19, 2017

The Honorable Joe Manchin  
United States Senate  
306 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

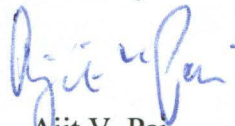
Dear Senator Manchin:

Thank you for your letter regarding the recently established Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force. The Task Force will oversee both the Mobility Fund Phase II and Connect American Fund Phase II auctions and ensure that rural areas are not left behind while urban and suburban America continue to see improvements in mobile and fixed broadband service.

The Task Force will help ensure that universal service funds are allocated efficiently for rural broadband deployment and that as many Americans as possible are able to get Internet access. As you note, making efficient use of these resources will require knowing where coverage does or does not exist. For this reason, in the Mobility Fund Phase II Report and Order the Commission asked for public comment on establishing a robust challenge process for determining the set of areas eligible for Mobility Fund support. The challenge process will ensure that funding is targeted to the areas that lack 4G LTE service or only have 4G LTE service due to universal service subsidies. At a minimum, parties will have the opportunity to review the Commission's coverage analysis and challenge initial determinations. Stakeholders have been coming forward with specific and constructive suggestions for how we should structure the challenge process. The Task Force and staff are reviewing these ideas, and I expect the Commission will be able to move forward on adopting the specifics of a robust challenge process soon.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Ajit V. Pai





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

June 19, 2017

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
United States Senate  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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